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wrought by means of a frame, either of metal or wood, in which the requisite pattern had been cut, as is done with stencils. This pattern was placed flat on the face of the plaster as it dried, and the pattern was cleverly incised, as it were, through the openings. It could also be pressed on the plaster until the surface pattern was indented. The composition of the plaster for such purposes was undoubtedly cared for, as well as the manipulation, for the durability of it has been tested by many centuries of exposure. A band of such ornament can be carried across brickwork, or round a brick-built tower, as it was by the Moorish artists. Examples of such application can be found in plenty, and it is always richly effective. The Moors showed fine judgment in the use of this ornamentation in relation to the whole building on which they applied it; not being led away by the facility they thus had for the employment of detail, but using the work in uniform masses, or bands, they avoided any expression of pettiness by profuse meaningless variety.

For the interior courts and chambers mural decorative work in plaster was largely used. The plaster was of fine quality, and was cut and carved in situ by the artist; it was simply sculptured on the spot as stone or alabaster might be carved, no mould being used. The capitals of columns were thus produced in delicately intricate work. At Toledo there is a synagogue that was constructed in the twelfth century by Moorish artists, and was afterward forcibly seized and converted to Christian uses, where the application of plaster-work of this kind is exemplified with conspicuous effect. The spandrels above the arches are all original carvings of arabesque pattern, showing delicate undercutting as well as surface work of peculiar beauty. In all parts of the structure there is that delightful variety in detail with unity of effect such as artistic hand-work can give, but which mechanical repetition will not achieve. The mere play of light and shadow on such a carved surface, if it be white or of a uniform light tint, has a charm of its own; but when the carving is emphasized by color the effect is most powerful. It is the principle of the work, not existing specimens of it, that we should copy—the same principles that we may see practically illustrated in the Alhambra, and equally in other Mohammedan structures. We may not require the splendid harmonies of those wonderful walls for our purposes, but we should none the less learn from them to produce what we want. We do want art in our plaster work. The embedding of colored tiles for architectural decoration in pattern work for dadoes, for pavements, and the like, and the rich, glossy coloring that can thus be imparted to mural effects, whether on the interior or exterior of structures, are resources to which we may also well turn attention, with good hope of developing valuable results.

#### A ROYAL BEDSTEAD.

IN the corporation records of Leicester, England, there is still preserved a story curiously illustrative of the darkness and precaution of the character of Richard III. Among his camp baggage it was his custom to carry a cumbersome wooden bedstead, which he averred was the only couch he could sleep in, but in which he contrived to have a secret receptacle for treasure, so that it was concealed under a weight of timber. After Bosworth Field the troops of Henry pillaged Leicester, but the royal bed was neglected by every plunderer as useless lumber. The owner of the house, afterward discovering the hoard, became suddenly rich, without any visible cause. He bought land, and at length became Mayor of Leicester. Many years afterward his widow, who had been left in great affluence, was assassinated by her servant, who had been privy to the affair; and at the trial of this culprit and her accomplices the whole transaction came to light. Concerning this bed, a public print of

1830 states that "about half a century since, the relic was purchased by a furniture-broker in Leicester, who slept in it for many years, and showed it to the curious; it continues in as good condition apparently as when used by King Richard, being formed of oak and having a high polish. The daughter of the broker having married one Babington, of Rothley, near Leicester, the bedstead was removed to Babington's house, where it is still preserved."



DECORATIVE DESIGN.

#### USE AND ABUSE OF WINDOW CURTAINS.

A ROOM is generally considered almost unfurnished if the windows are not hung with some kind of drapery. The original object of this drapery was to keep out a draught of air, which found its way through the imperfectly-fitting windows; and the anti-type of our window-hangings was a simple curtain, formed of a material suitable to achieve the purpose sought. Such a curtain was legitimate and desirable, and would contrast strangely with the elaborate fes-

is pleasant. Many windows that are well made, and thus keep out all currents of air, need no curtains. If the window mouldings are of an architectural character, and are colored much darker than the wall, so as to become an obvious frame to the window, and thus do for the window what a picture-frame does for a picture, no curtains will be required. A striking illustration of this is described as follows by a writer in Cassell's Technical Educator: "Two

adjoining rooms are alike in their architecture; one is decorated, and has the window casement of such colors as strongly contrast, while they are yet harmonious, with the wall. Before the room was decorated, and the windows were thus treated, a general light color prevailed, both on the woodwork and on the walls of the room, and curtains were hung at the windows in the usual way. With the altered decorations, the windows became so effective that I at once saw the undesirability of rehanging the curtains, and yet not one of all my friends has observed that there are no curtains to the windows; while if the curtains are removed from the adjoining room, where the window-frames are as light as the walls, the first question asked is, 'Where are your curtains?' Curtains should be hung on a simple and obvious pole. All means of hiding this pole are foolish and useless. This pole need not be very thick, and is better formed of wood than of metal, for then the rings to which the curtains are attached pass along almost noiselessly. The ends of the pole may be of metal, but I prefer simple balls of wood. The pole may be grooved, and any little enrichments may be introduced into these grooves, providing the carving does not come to the surface, and thus touch the rings, which by their motion would injure it. Whatever is used in the way of enrichment should be of a simple character, for the height at which the curtain pole is placed would render very fine work altogether ineffective."

THE unfortunate possessors of an immense mirror would confer great benefit upon their drawing-room decoration by having it removed from its position, and the plate, which is probably of good thick glass, cut into two or three oblong pieces. These put into narrow gilt, ebony, or other frames, and hung at a level where pleasant reflections are possible, would have far more than double or treble the effect of the one large surface. If strong unwillingness should exist to have large plates of glass cut into pieces, an alternative which, if not admirable, is still an improvement upon the large unbroken surface, remains for choice. This is to use an ebonized oak or "oiled" walnut frame, altogether inclosing and dividing by cross-pieces the surface of the glass into compartments, and leaving perhaps one uninterrupted, oblong piece, about eighteen inches high, at the bottom.

A CORNER cupboard that has solid, unglazed doors, either flat or rounded, would gain richness by the insides of the doors being covered with choice bits of old Venetian leather, or, failing that, a painted diaper, perhaps with gold-leaf background: when such doors are opened and laid back against either wall, the warm fine color would be a valuable adjunct to, not interfering with, the brilliant beauties of shelved treasures, such as rare old china, glass, or silver.



DECORATIVE DESIGN.

tooning and quadrupled curtains of our present windows. We daily see yards of valuable material, arranged in massive and absurd folds, shutting out that light which is necessary to our health and well-being—a pair of heavy stuff curtains and a pair of lace curtains to each window, each curtain consisting of sufficient material to more than cover the window of itself. An excess of drapery is always vulgar, and a little drapery usefully and judiciously employed

If rooms be small and ornaments and treasures varied, great scope is given to ingenuity and contrivance to gain a suitable resting-place for each art-object. It is excellent practice for the eager mind to have to battle with inconvenience and fight out a clear if not perfect path through the difficulties of trying to make the best of ugly proportions and coarse shapes. Fortunately color is one's own to choose and may cover a multitude of other sins. Mistakes must be made, failures are inevitable; but experience is gained by each disappointment.